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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
INFORMATION REPORT

COUNTRY Liberia

SUBJECT Road Conditions

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DATE (OF INFO.)

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2. During the course of conversation with him concerning some of his experiences, we discussed road conditions, and he informed me that roads are practically non-existent in the country, and are deteriorating in quality rather than improving.
3. He stated that roads are mostly just trails and there are only three roads which could actually justify the name. One of these runs 40 miles from Monrovia to Bomi Hills, site of the iron ore project. A second runs to the rubber plantation, and the third runs to Ganta on the French Guinea border.
4. In the entire country there is only one paved stretch of highway and it consists of only five miles. It was a part of the US Navy Port Development program and it runs across Bushrod Island.
5. The paved highway is of macadam construction, black top on rolled stone base. The original base of the road was a railroad right of way and it provided a good substantial base for the road. The road is about 25 feet wide and can carry 15-ton loads with no worry about breaking to pieces.
6. The road includes the new WVS Tubman Bridge across the St Paul River. The bridge is about 955 feet long and is of concrete construction. It is also used by the railroad to Bomi Hills.

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7. The bridge had originally been built in connection with a railroad to a quarry from which stones were obtained to build jetties in the port. After the quarrying was done, the railroad bridge was converted to a highway bridge as well, and the original railroad bed was used as the basis for the highway.
8. The macadam section of the highway goes only to a point immediately across the St Paul River, and from there to the iron ore mine at Bomi Hills the road is dirt. It parallels the railroad and runs through Brewerville, a former stopping off place for slave traders. It is an extremely small community with only six or seven stores, operated by Lebanese and Syrians.
9. The road to Bomi Hills, while dirt, can be drained. It was originally turned over to the government by the US firm which developed it, and the government was supposed to maintain it. However, it was so poorly kept up that the mining company in turn was given a contract by the government to maintain the road.
10. The load limit depends on two small wooden bridges. While the mine was being developed, several 20-ton earth moving units were driven up to the mine, empty, but it was necessary to shore up the bridges in order for the equipment to cross.
11. The road to Bomi Hills is not quite two cars wide. Two pick-up trucks can pass by pulling over, but it would be impossible for trucks to pass even if they hugged the bush. The difficulty of maintaining the road is indicated by the fact that there is in excess of 300 inches of rain per year, and the road is frequently just a big mudhole.
12. Even so, the road to Bomi Hills is better than the road to the rubber plantation and the road to Ganta. The road to the rubber plantation is likewise of dirt and it is not too well maintained, allegedly, to discourage too many visits by home office "brass". The road to the rubber plantation is almost in a marsh. It is poorly drained and is nothing but a quagmire in rainy weather.
13. An indication of the quality of the road is that a 3/4-ton pick-up will be completely worn out in less than 9,000 miles. Equipment just doesn't last on any roads in Liberia. The roads knock out the rear ends of trucks, break springs, and all equipment is constantly in need of repair.
14. It is not advisable to use anything but pick-up trucks with steel plates in the rear to provide some ballast. However, there is one transportation company, the Owens Grove Transportation Company, which operates four or five station wagons. This is the only taxi service or independent truck fleet in Liberia. The vehicles can be rented to go from Monrovia to Roberts Field.
15. The road to Ganta is in the same condition as the others and is passable only by truck. This road is the only means of communication by vehicle between Liberia and French Guinea. One frequently sees German-built diesel trucks on this road bringing in palm kernels, hides and coconut from French Guinea. As concerns fuel, lighter vehicles use gasoline primarily, but diesels are used in the iron ore mine and on the haul from French Guinea.
16. The roads in Liberia are not administratively classified and there is no system of highway markings for direction or control of traffic.
17. There was a ferry service in existence on the Monrovia-Bomi Hills road at the St Paul River, but the ferry service was discontinued in 1949 when the WVS Tubman Bridge was opened to traffic.

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18. There was discussion concerning the possible establishment of a hydro-electric power plant on the St Paul River near Monrovia, but as of 1954, the project is still talk and even the site is not yet firmly decided. Inasmuch as the country side is completely flat, it is not particularly adaptable to hydro electric projects and the project eventually might be placed somewhere else other than on the St Paul River.

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